

**Project Designee: Sherrie Hayashi, Commissioner**

**Labor Commission  
Preparing for an Aging Utah  
2006**

## **BRIEF PART 1 INTERNAL SCAN**

The Labor Commission (Commission) is a regulatory agency whose mission is to be a leader in achieving safety and fairness in Utah's workplaces. The Commission is comprised of five different Divisions: The Utah Antidiscrimination & Labor Division (UALD); Utah Occupational Safety & Health (UOSH), Industrial Accidents (IA), Boiler & Elevator Safety (Safety), Adjudication, and Administration. Each of the Divisions is distinct and will be impacted differently by Utah's Aging Population.

**(a) Identify the impact of the increase in Utah's aging population on your agency. How will the changing demographic affect your agency's overarching policy issues, direction, program considerations, changing constituency needs, and management concerns?**

For the Commission, an increase in the aging population and its impact of creating a larger workforce is more significant than the age of the workforce itself. In terms of our enforcement responsibilities, a larger workforce translates into more work-related injuries, unpaid wages, antidiscrimination cases and more workplaces subject to safety and health inspections, but the workload is only minimally impacted by the age of that workforce itself. Where the Commission does need to prepare is in terms of how the aging population will affect our education and outreach programs, constituency needs and internal management concerns.

By 2030, approximately 500,000 Utahns are projected to be aged 65 and older. Financial and health care concerns and changes in Social Security and retirement systems will likely result in older workers returning or remaining in the workforce rather than retiring. Older workers bring knowledge, experience and a work ethic which are valuable

assets to an employer. The increased workforce population is projected to be more ethnically and racially diverse, but with older workers there may be some decline in function due to the natural aging process. The Commission will be tasked to apply the appropriate federal and state laws to an older, more fluid workforce, a larger workforce bridging multiple categories of full time and semi-retired and more ethnically and racially diverse than today.

Workers age 65+ however make up only a small part of the overall Utah workforce in comparison with other age groups. Utah reflects the national trend of a low number of injuries occurring in the 65+ work force with 1.1% of the total injuries recorded compared with the national average which is 1.9%. Using baseline statistics as of 2005, the Industrial Accidents Division projects a 2% per year growth rate of work related injuries. Broken down by age group, extrapolations project that by 2017, there will be a 29.7% increase in work related injuries for workers aged 40-49, a 30% increase for workers aged 50-59; and a 33% increase for workers aged 60-65. Using the same rates of growth, it is projected that in 2029, there will be a 68% increase for workers aged 40-49; a 7% increase for those aged 50-59; and a 77.5% increase for those 60-65. With only 1.1% of work-related injuries being projected within the age range of 65+, there is some, but not a substantial impact affecting older populations.

However, with a larger, older workforce, education and outreach programs within the Commission will be impacted. Preparing employers to address the needs of an aging workforce in terms of age discrimination, disability discrimination issues and safety will assist employers in providing an older workforce with a fair and safe working environment.

**(b) If your agency has begun to address the impact of the aging population, describe what you are doing to address or respond to these anticipated changes, including identified priorities, overarching policies, programs, etc.**

Through the Utah 2030 Aging Project, the Commission is now beginning to address the impact of the aging population by identifying program considerations, constituencies and management issues that will need to be addressed in the coming years. Three areas in which the Commission can begin addressing the impact of the aging population are: 1) **Competent and Dedicated Staff**; 2) **Quality Constituent Services**; and 3) **Efficiencies**. The Commission has also incorporated this planning process into our Balanced Scorecard.

1) **Competent and Dedicated Staff.** Internal retention issues will be addressed through training and performance management tools to assure a competent and dedicated staff. As the Commission's workforce also increases in age, cross-training and succession training are imperative to assure smooth transition as older employees move out of the workforce.

2) **Quality Constituent Services.** Education will be critical in addressing the needs of an aging workforce. Training employees on the rights and responsibilities in the workforce and providing them with information will enable them to have the tools to address issues directly with their employers and if those issues cannot be resolved, those employees will know which agency to contact in order to have their concerns addressed. Educating employers will prevent safety violations and antidiscrimination issues. An example of safety training specifically aimed at issues involving an aging workforce is educating employers on providing more efficient lighting to address diminishing visual

acuity as we age. This is a simple low-cost solution which benefits the employer and the employee in terms of a safer workplace.

3)      **Efficiencies.** In order to continue being a leader in achieving safety and fairness in Utah's workplaces with an increasing workforce population, the Commission will need to identify efficiencies in operation. Simply increasing numbers of staff is not the best or most practical means of addressing our regulatory responsibilities. Utilizing technology, reviewing our processes, procedures, and policies to eliminate redundancies and inefficiencies will be the best method of improving the Commission's operations.

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#### **Part II: Prioritization**

**Each Division used the method outlined in their Workplan to identify its priorities. In summarizing the three overarching priorities for the Commission, each Division's priorities were reviewed and the primary recommendations were determined to fall within one of the categories identified by the Commission as a category within its Balanced Scorecard Format. Those 3 overarching areas were used to summarize the priorities for the Commission.**

## **BRIEF PART II PRIORITIZATION**

There are three overarching issues which the Commission's priorities can be summarized: 1) **Competent and Dedicated Staff**; 2) **Quality Constituent Services**, and 3) **Efficiencies**.

**1) Competent and Dedicated Staff:** Maintaining sufficient competent and dedicated staff is critical for the Commission to carry out its responsibilities. An increasing workforce size translates into a larger base of potential claims and investigations that must be handled by the Commission. Retention of staff is difficult because of salary levels in comparison with private sector positions. We need to identify means of increasing job satisfaction through training opportunities and other incentives for attracting employees. Workload is already nearly overwhelming with current staffing levels. Increases in demand without sufficient competent and dedicated staff will render the Commission ineffective in its responsibilities.

**2) Quality Constituent Services:** In order to effectively provide education and outreach, the Commission will need to continue to be proactive in partnering with state local and government agencies, nonprofit organizations, County Aging Services, associations, Universities, and private employers. Partnerships will allow the Commission to efficiently use scarce resources, and provide the best mechanism for dissemination of our education and outreach programs. Utilizing technology such as the web site to include video and sign language information including general information on how to fill out forms and directions to the office, and reissuing forms in larger font will also assist the Commission in providing quality constituent services.

**3)      Efficiencies:** The Commission will need to review its policies, procedures and practices to determine if there are better, more efficient means of utilizing our scarce resources and avoiding bureaucratic redundancies.



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Part III: Planning**

**PRIORITY ISSUE #1 Competent and Dedicated Staff.** The Commission must retain competent and dedicated staff in order to handle the increase in workload that will be faced with an increased workforce population.

### **Actions**

- Review Performance Plans with Balanced Scorecard to assure that employees' performance is tied to agency goals.
- Develop and implement ongoing internal Staff Training programs to include cross-training and succession training
- Review and revise Commission and Division policies and procedures to create other incentives to acknowledge and reward employees for exceptional performance.

### **Results**

- Goal Oriented performance
- Better trained staff, prepared for wide variety of responsibilities and for transitions in management and peer workers.
- Staff are acknowledged for exceptional performance, thereby creating incentives for more competent and dedicated staff.
- Improved retention levels for staff (less turn-over)

**PRIORITY ISSUE #2: Quality Constituent Services.** With scarce resources, the Commission must find ways of effectively and efficiently delivering quality constituent services by developing partnerships with outside organizations.

**Actions**

- Develop partnerships with state and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, County Aging services, associations, higher educational institutions, and private employers.
- Utilize the website to disseminate education and outreach programs
- Review agency forms to determine if they are accessible, including using larger scale font.

**Results:**

- Partnerships will benefit the Commission by providing effective and efficient vehicles for disseminating information.
- Better accessibility of educational information utilizing the web in formats that are easy for users to obtain
- Better accessibility of forms utilized by the Commission.

**PRIORITY ISSUE #3: Efficiencies.** The Commission will need to identify and implement more efficient systems in order to meet our responsibilities in response to the needs of a growing workforce.

**Actions**

- Review its policies, procedures and practices to determine if there are better, more efficient means of utilizing our scarce resources and avoiding bureaucratic redundancies.

**Results**

- The Commission is a better, more efficient organization.